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RUDODKA/100ARW CP RAF MILDENHALL UK PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJB/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUZEFAA/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP PRIORITY 0113
RUEAFVS/OSD WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 000802

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SUBJECT: RWANDA AND FRANCE RESTORE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS THE
DAY AFTER RWANDA ADMITTED TO BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

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Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Governments of Rwanda (GOR) and France (GOF) announced November 29 that they had agreed to restore fully diplomatic relations between the two countries. Relations were ruptured in November 2006 after a French judge indicted senior GOR officials on charges - vehemently rejected by the GOR - that the officials had taken part in the plane shoot down that triggered the Rwandan genocide. The Minister of Information told the DCM the news personally, but early reports caught off guard even some senior GOR officials in the Presidency and Foreign Ministry. The resumption of relations came the day after the British Commonwealth voted to admit Rwanda to its ranks. Rwanda is only the second country (after Mozambique in 1995) to become part of the Commonwealth without having had any prior colonial or constitutional ties to Britain. There are eight other largely francophone countries in the Commonwealth, most of them islands. The critical question for many is what, if anything, does this mean for the status of the French indictment against GOR officials. That issue is uppermost in the minds today of the Rwandans involved, the Rwandan public, and those European ambassadors here whose countries have earned Rwanda's ire by enforcing the French warrants. End Summary.

¶2. (C) GOR Minister of Information told DCM November 29 that the GOR and GOF had agreed to restore diplomatic relations. The announcement caught many off guard, even if a new French Ambassador is not named in two weeks, as one local report predicted. When one European ambassador asked a Rwandan Presidency official if it were true, the contact first dismissed the idea as a rumor before confirming it minutes later. A ForMin official told another European ambassador it was not true and then also quickly reversed himself after checking. The Minister of Communications told us that the timing of the announcement had nothing to do with Rwanda's Commonwealth entry, but reflected a successful end to months of efforts by very senior GOR and GOF officials to find a way to restore relations and deal with the ongoing legal investigation into the 2006 indictments of senior GOR

officials by a French judge that was the cause of Rwanda's decision to sever relations.

13. (C) The decision followed within the week the arrival here of a three-person team of French judicial investigators, reportedly looking into the shoot down of former President Habyarimana's plane that was the trigger for the genocide. A number of witnesses to the purported role of GOR officials in that action have recanted in the past 12 months greatly weakening the French case. The GOF had reportedly told the GOR that the investigation of the case "would be reopened" earlier this year and the arrival of the French judicial investigators appears to confirm that approach. There has been no indication of any change in the status of the pending GOF indictments, though that issue remains uppermost in the minds of many here. The outcome of the new investigation of those indictments is a key concern to the Rwandan officials involved, to Rwandan public opinion - particularly the elites, and to the resident European Union diplomatic missions here. (Public anti-French and anti-German feelings were inflamed last year by official denunciations following the arrest of Chief of Protocol Rose Kabuye in Germany on the French warrant. This led to a temporary "suspension" of Rwanda's relations with Germany.)

14. (C) Comment: The decision to resume diplomatic relations with France underscores Rwanda's intent to involve the broadest possible coalition of international partners in Rwanda's development. That is reflected by Rwanda's continued membership in the International Organization of French speaking Nations (OIF, "la francophonie") and its continued outreach to the UK and other EU nations as well as U.S., Chinese, Indian, and regional development partners.

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The announcement that relations would be restored followed the early morning arrival in Kigali on November 29 of French Presidency Secretary General Gueyant on a direct French government flight. One EU ambassador said that the decision reflected France's long-standing desire to renew its presence in what had been its long time "hunting preserve," but dismissed a BBC report that suggested the resumption of relations was timed simply to coincide with the Rwandan entry into the Commonwealth. The British ambassador (protect) agreed with his colleague. The soon to be High Commissioner downplayed the timing and noted that there were already eight other francophone members in the Commonwealth. (Note: The British ambassador added, however, that the Rwandan entry was very significant. He stressed that Rwanda was the first new member since 1995 and the first to have undergone and passed what he described as a precedent-setting comprehensive review of governance and policy matters in order to qualify for admission to the Commonwealth. End Note) A third EU Ambassador put the timing down to the GOF interest in assuring President Kagame's attendance at a French-hosted economic development summit slated for early next spring. The announcement yesterday serves both French and Rwandan interests in accelerating together the private sector-driven growth of Africa. The decision to restore relations with France was so closely guarded in part because - before it became a "fait accompli" - it might have faced strong internal opposition from members of Kagame's own power base, many of whom are still leery of France and resentful of the French role before, during, and after the genocide. Those who share that view are not likely to be fully assuaged unless, as part of his new approach to Africa, President Sarkozy joins the ranks of those who have apologized for their countries' roles in 1994. End Comment.

SYMINGTON